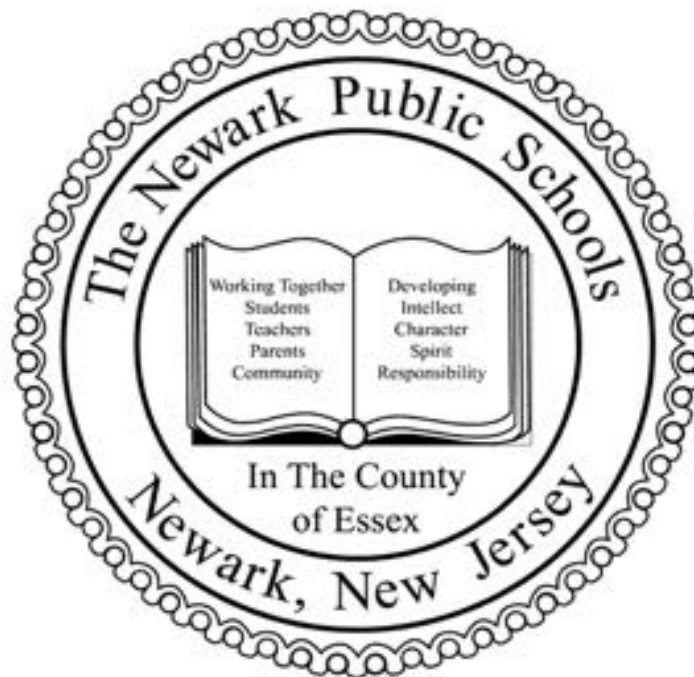




Newark Public Schools Board of Education

Assessment of District Progress

2/24/2015



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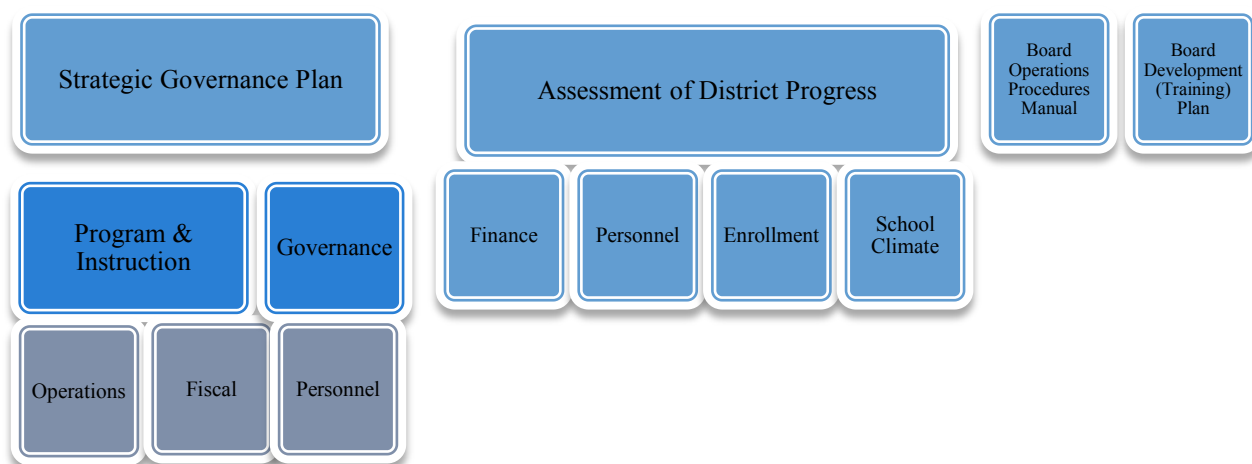
Purpose of District Assessment

The role of the Newark Board of Education under state intervention is to advise the State Appointed Superintendent on matters of the District as they pertain to student achievement and operational efficiency of Newark Public Schools. Statute NJ 18A:7A-47, pertaining to state intervention of local boards of education, states:

“On a regular basis, but no less than twice each year, the board of education shall report in writing directly to the State district superintendent concerning its assessment of the progress of the district. Copies of the report shall be forwarded to the commissioner and the State board. The State district superintendent shall make such clerical and other resources available as are necessary for the effective operation of the board of education.”

The Assessment covers the performance of Newark Public Schools in the five key areas from the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum and makes recommendations for strategic actions, with Program & Instruction as the highest priority area because of the direct connection to student achievement. Using district data sources from FY2011-2014, we have analyzed each area with the goal of gaining a broad perspective of the performance of Newark Public Schools. In addition to our statutory obligations, we view this initial District Assessment as a baseline for establishing the board’s governance profile, a demonstration of our ability to govern Newark Public Schools, and a responsibility that stems from the Transition Plan (dated July 28, 2014). During the FY14-15 academic year, the Board developed a Strategic Governance Plan which serves as a blueprint for how the board intends to function and build its internal governance capacities. The Strategic Governance Plan and the District Assessment will help highlight areas of opportunity and drive future decision-making on district priorities. Furthermore, the District Assessment will guide how the Board recommends solution-based plans to improve Newark Public Schools over the long term.

Newark Board of Education Governance Framework



Program & Instruction

BACKGROUND – PROGRAM & INSTRUCTION

The mission of the Program & Instruction Committee is to provide process guidance, standards and oversight of the curriculum approval process and consider matters related to PreK-12 curriculum and instruction; and to strengthen student achievement by supporting the district's efforts in ensuring all NPS students are college-ready, ultimately increasing high school graduation rates and decreasing the dropout rate among NPS students.

The district assessment is organized into findings and guiding questions and/or recommendations. The guiding questions will be used to prompt a deeper dive by the district into the board findings.

Finding 1. K-8 PERFORMANCE DATA

The State District Superintendent has committed the district to rapidly drive dramatic student achievement gains. To that end, the district has undergone a number of programmatic changes since SY11-12, for example:

- Since SY11-12, 25 elementary schools have come off-line, been consolidated, launched as charter schools, or undergone a Renew transformation. Renew Schools embody 5 Key Ingredients: Great School Leader, Excellent Staff, Social and Emotional Supports, 21st Century Learning Environments, and Extended Learning Time & Adult Education.
 1. Madison Avenue School (Charter Launch)
 2. Bragraw Avenue School (Charter Launch)
 3. Alexander Street School (Charter Launch)
 4. Miller Street School @ Louise A. Spencer School
 5. Hawkins Street Renew School
 6. Burnet Street School (Closed)
 7. 18th Avenue (Closed)
 8. Cleveland Renew School
 9. Newton Street School (Closed)
 10. Sussex Avenue Renew School
 11. Belmont Runyon Renew School
 12. Chancellor Avenue Renew School
 13. Dayton St./B.R.I.C.K Peshine Avenue Renew School
 14. George Washington Avenue Renew School
 15. Maple Avenue School (Temporarily Closed Will Convert To ECE)
 16. Luis Munoz Marin Renew School
 17. Benjamin Franklin Renew School
 18. Rafael Hernandez Renew School

19. Dr. E. Alma Flagg Renew School
 20. Dr. William H. Horton Renew School
 21. Roseville Avenue School (Early Childhood School)
 22. 13th Avenue/Dr. Martin Luther King Renew School
 23. Camden Street Renew School
 24. South 17th Street Renew School
 25. Speedway Avenue Renew School
- New school models have been adopted at the middle school level—American History High School (6-12), Arts High School (7-12), Eagle Academy for Young Men (6-9), Girls' Academy of Newark (6-9), Newark Early College High School (7-12), Science Park High School (7-12).
 - New curricula adoptions in K-8 Language Arts Literacy (LAL) and Mathematics

The district currently has 16 Renew School Schools in which daily learning time is extended (by 60-90 minutes), staffing is flexible (exempt from certain mandates of the collective bargaining agreement), and significant investments were made in technology and infrastructure. During the September 12, 2014 General Board Meeting the district reported that in SY 13-14, only 3 (2%) of K-8 Renew Schools had an average LAL Achievement gain of 5 points or more and 11 (65%) of K-8 Renew Schools had an average Math Achievement gain of 5 points or more. Of the original 8 Renew Schools, 7 have sustained leadership and staff.

Performance data points to a district-wide upward trend in proficiency/advanced proficiency in grades 6-8 from SY2011-12 to 2012-13. However, proficiency scores were not sustained in SY2013-14. Grade 7 NJ ASK proficiency in Math is the only area that had consistent growth year over year during the last three testing cycles.

NJ ASK Language Arts Proficiency Scores

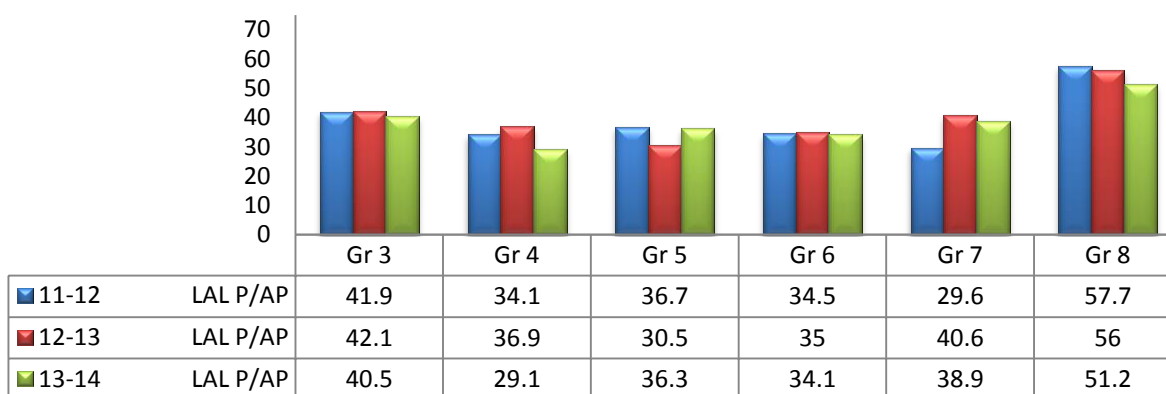


Figure 1 Data Source: NPS Records

NJ ASK Math Proficiency Scores

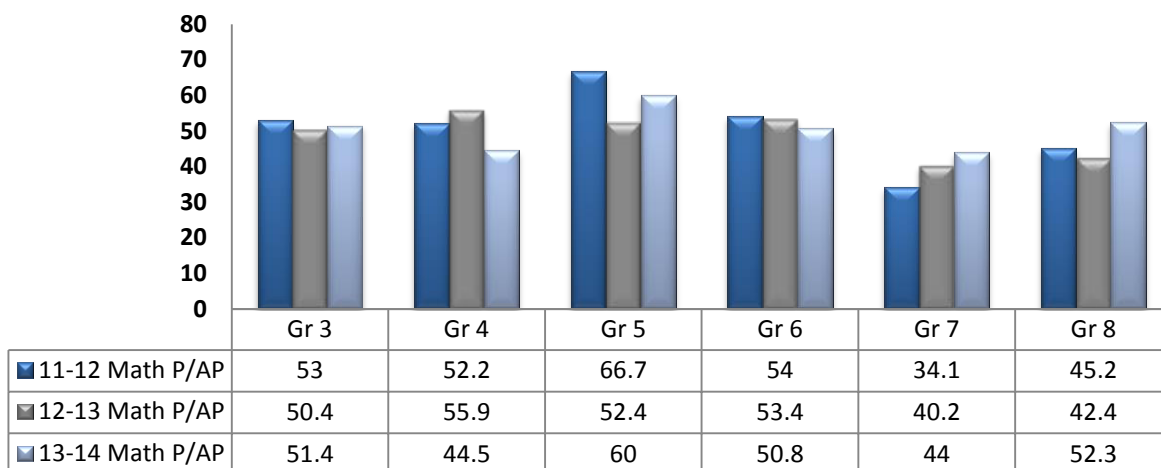


Figure 2 Data Source: NPS Records

NPS NJ ASK LAL & Math Scores 2013-2014

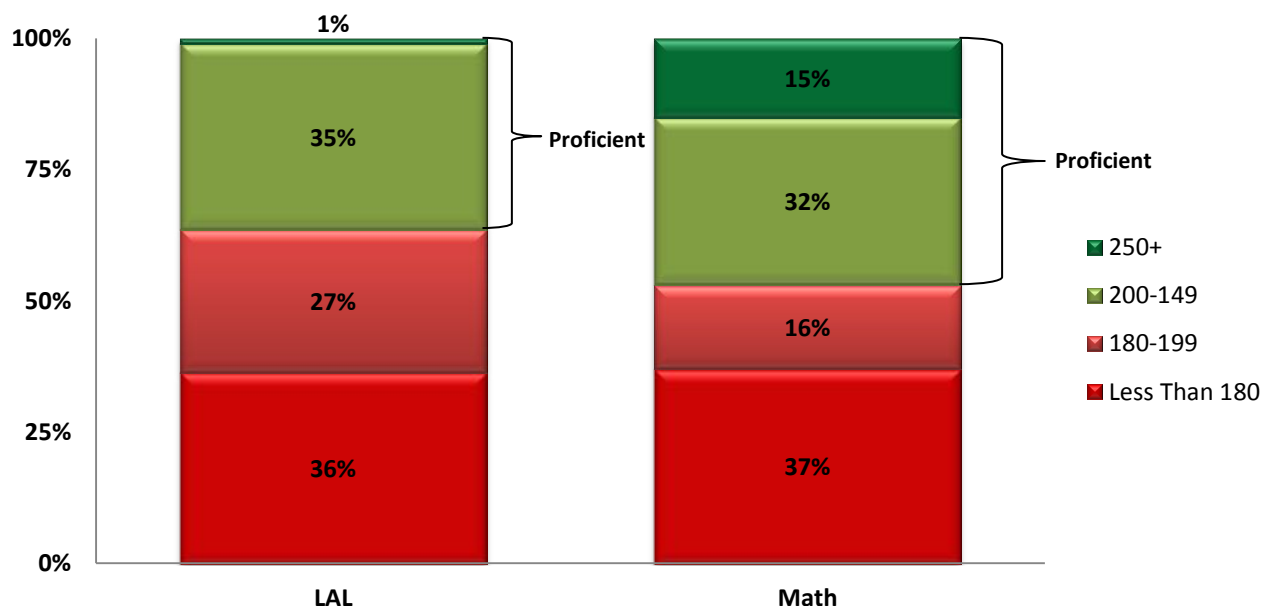


Figure 3 Data Source: NPS Performance Analysis Report - September 2014

Average LAL Score: 189
% Proficient 36%

Average Math Score: 197
% Proficient 47%

Guiding Questions

1. Why are the year-to-year gains in grades 3 – 5 flat or declining?
2. Has the new curricula adoption at the lower grades better-prepared students for grade level proficiency?
3. Why is there such a large disparity in advanced proficiency between LAL and Math?
4. How is the district meeting the needs of students who are performing above grade level expectations?
5. How will the district leverage dollars and resources to deliver on the promise of providing adult education?

Recommendations

1. The district needs to outline a plan for addressing the anticipated change proficiency rates given the adoption of PARCC.
2. The district should perform a deep dive analysis of which LAL techniques are successful/unsuccessful, and then transfer that knowledge to other Renew Schools.
3. The district should work with the New Jersey Department of Education to timeline for the delivery of student performance results for state assessments.

Finding 2. HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE DATA/COLLEGE READY

In SY11-12, the district began administering a series of assessments designed by American College Testing (ACT). The ACT is a college readiness assessment that is used to identify content areas where students need to improve, as well as identify gaps in the curriculum that may prevent are not preparing students in reaching their goals for college and career success. Initial results of the ACT revealed that 19% of testers are on track to be college ready in English, 17% in Math, 12% in Reading and 4% in Science.

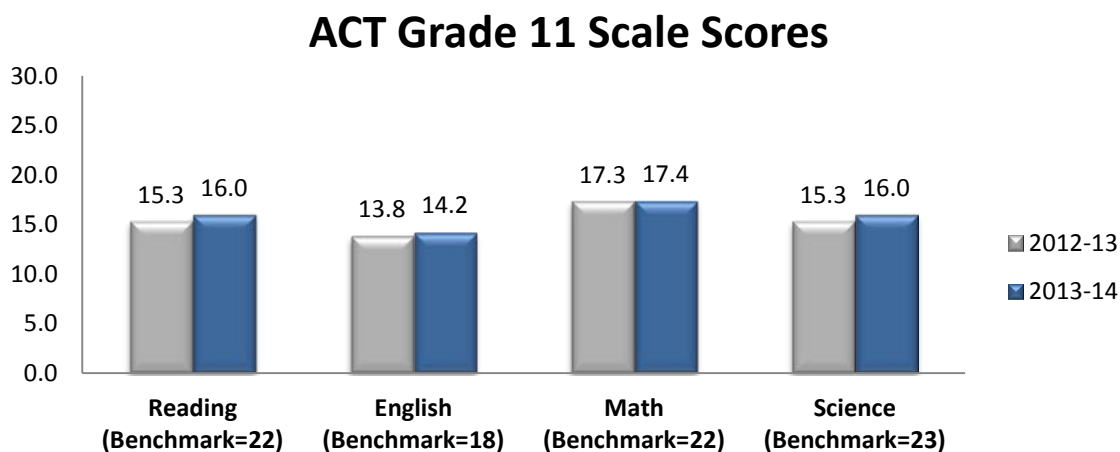


Figure 4 Date Source: NPS Records

Current district ACT performance shows slight growth in each of the four content areas, but NPS students have not met the national benchmarks for the ACT since being implemented in the district. Subsequently, only 42% of the cohort graduated through the HSPA pathway in 2013. Although the district has increased the HSPA graduation rate by 11% since 2011, there was only a 3% increase from 2012 to 2013. According to the NJ Department of Education, the cohort graduation rate for Newark Public Schools was 68.63% in 2014. The district administration was unable to provide a break out of the 2014 cohort graduation rate to compare the percentage of students who graduated through the HSPA pathway and the non-traditional pathway. Not having this data readily available shows a lack of consistency with data reporting, and delivery from the NJ Department of Education.

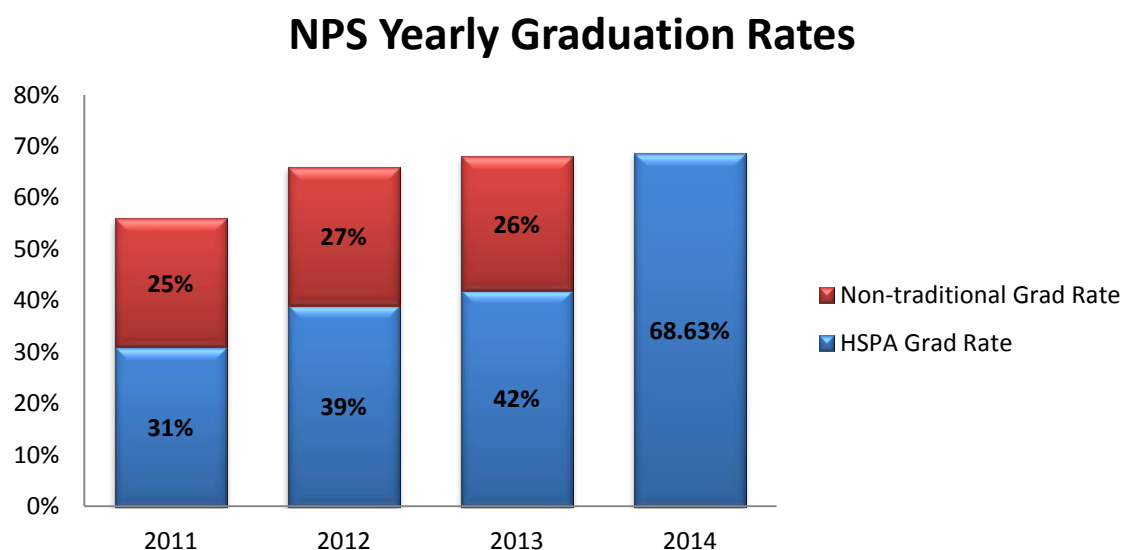


Figure 5 Data Source: NPS Records and New Jersey Department of Education

Across district high schools, 11th grade HSPA pass rates in Math dropped to 53% in the 2013-14 school year. This score represents a 19.2% decline across Newark Public Schools. HSPA pass rates for Language Arts also dropped 6.6% in the same year. Data shows that the HSPA Math and LAL scores obtained during the 2012-13 school year were not sustained in the subsequent school year.

NJ HSPA Proficiency Rates

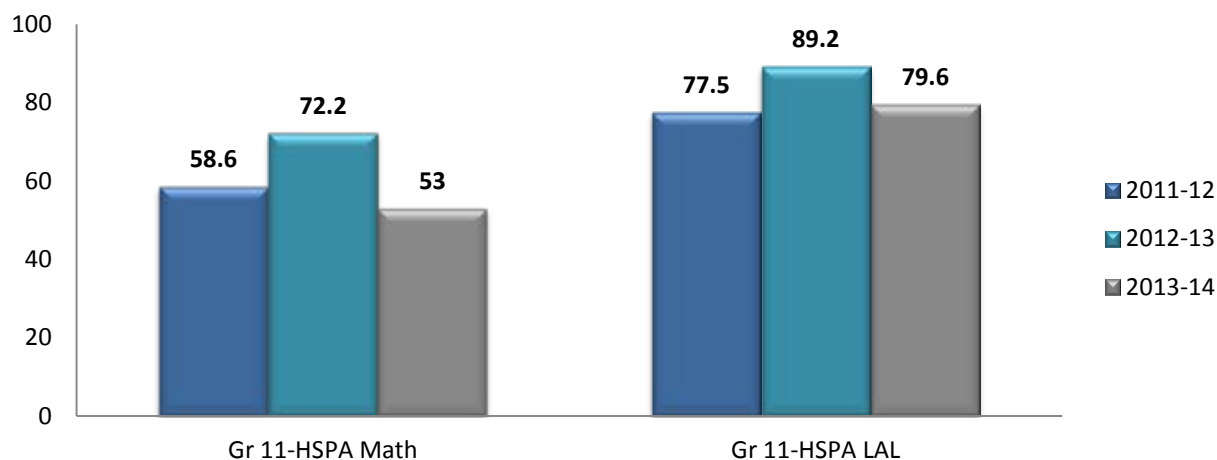


Figure 6 Data Source: New Jersey Department of Education

In SY11-12, the district reported 687 students dropped out of high school for reasons unknown. An additional 316 students never reported to school. Data indicates that in SY 11-12 a combined 80% of high school dropouts were no-shows or had an unknown reason for dropping out. As of Feb. 2014, the district could not identify the dropout reason for 74% of high school dropouts. 25% of high school dropouts reported in SY13-14 were no-shows and 49% had an unknown drop-out reason in the district's reporting system. The high school dropout data provided did not include full data for SY2013-14.

Table 1 Data Source: Newark Public Schools

<i>NPS High School Dropout Data</i>			
Dropout Reason	SY 11-12	SY12-13	SY 13-14
D1 – Expulsion	1 (0.9%)	2 (0.3%)	0 (0%)
D2 – Incarceration	16 (1.5%)	20 (2.8%)	11 (1.8%)
D3 – Physical , mental or emotional disability	11 (1.0%)	10 (1.4%)	4 (0.7%)
D4 – Dissatisfied with school	34 (3.1%)	57 (7.9%)	109 (18.1%)
D5 – Economic necessity	19 (1.7%)	14 (1.9%)	9 (1.5%)
D6 – Married and/or pregnant	5 (0.5%)	14 (1.9%)	2 (0.3%)
D7 – New residence, school status unknown	11 (1.0%)	11 (1.5%)	15 (2.5%)
D8 – Reason unknown	687 (62.3%)	506 (69.7%)	293 (48.8%)
D10 – Not of legal age	1 (0.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
D11 – Student reached max age and did not graduate	1 (0.9%)	4 (0.6%)	7 (1.2%)
T1 – No Show	3 (0.3%)	13 (1.8%)	53 (8.8%)
T2 – No Show	313 (28.4%)	75 (10.3%)	98 (16.3%)
Total	1,102	726	601

Recommendations

1. The district should do a deep dive analysis on the HSPA Pathway to understand the correlations between the ACT assessment, student preparation, etc.
2. The district should explore why HSPA pass rates have dropped and where feeder systems are/are not working (i.e., students are entering our high schools with high degrees of readiness/unreadiness).
3. The district should substantially upgrade and monitor its student mobility/drop-out/transfer data because of the obvious gaps in accounting and accuracy.

Finding 3. QUALITY SINGLE ACCOUNTABILITY CONTINUUM (QSAC)

As of the June 2014 Interim Review, Newark Public Schools (“the District”) scored 33% on the Quality Single Accountability Continuum Program & Instruction Subscale. This score is well below the state required 80% benchmark.

In SY 2012-2013, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) began implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver. Pursuant to the Flexibility Waiver, schools and districts will no longer be held to performance targets that reach 100% proficiency by 2014. This accountability system has been replaced with annual measurable objectives (AMOs). The AMOs are calculated for each school by the NJDOE, based on the goal of closing the achievement gap (in annual equal increments) by half within six years.

The District failed to meet the AMO in language arts literacy (LAL) and mathematics, resulting in a loss of 6 points.

Recommendations

1. The district should identify how resources (human, curricular, etc.) will be allocated to specifically address (1) and (2), particularly in light of expected budgetary constraints.
2. The district should provide a comparison of district schools vs. charter schools for all measures of academic progress.
3. The district should clarify its strategy on AMOs, and regularly present progress on AMO's across the grade levels and for each school.
4. The district should lay out a specific plan for addressing the gap between the QSAC Program and Instruction Subscale and the 80% benchmark.

Finding 4. STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The District launched an aggressive attendance improvement campaign themed “Attend Today Achieve Tomorrow” in the fall of 2013. The initiative was launched following the policy decision to decentralize the attendance functions to empower school-based teams with management of attendance policies and practices. When reviewing the student attendance percentages from the last three (3) years it can be inferred that the decline in student attendance is a direct result of the elimination of attendance counselors. However, a ten (10) year data trend shows that the District’s worst student attendance performance occurred in four (4) consecutive school years (2006-09).

As a result of the initiative, our Board and Superintendent readopted an amended attendance policy (File Code 5113) in November of 2013 to support the initiative and empower school leaders to own the attendance process in each school. The attendance policy highlights the role of Student Support Teams at the school level to help manage student attendance. The policy also highlights the steps that should be taken when a student is reported to have persistent absences (5-9 cumulative unexcused absences) or is considered to be a truant (10 or more cumulative unexcused absences). The policy states the following:

Persistent Absences

For between five and nine cumulative unexcused absences, the designated school staff shall:

- A. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student’s parent/guardian of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day and input the reason for the absence (provided by the parent/guardian) into the District student information database;
- B. Make three written attempts to request the parent attend an intervention meeting to address cumulative absences;
- C. Conduct a home visit if after the three outreach attempts, the parent does not respond, and to document outreach (calls, three written notices and home visit) in the District student information database;
- D. Evaluate the appropriateness of the Pupil Action Plan, and revise the Plan as needed, to identify patterns of unexcused absences and establish outcomes based upon the student’s needs and specify the interventions for achieving the outcomes, supporting the student’s return to school and regular attendance

Truancy

For cumulative unexcused absences totaling 10 or more (excluding hardships) for students ages six to 16, the designated school staff shall:

A. Refer, when appropriate, to the court program required by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;

B. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parent/guardian of the referral;

C. Continue to consult with the parent /guardian and involved agencies to support the student's return to school and regular attendance;

D. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

E. Follow all procedures required by N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School, and other applicable state and federal statutes as required.

If at any time it is suspected that there is a potential of abuse, neglect and/or a pupil is potentially missing the District shall implement all procedures required by law including reporting protocols, notification of parents/guardians and cooperation with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

Our Board believes that schools may not have the proper support structure established to ensure compliance to the current attendance policy. When the student attendance data was presented to our Board a request was made asking for a list of the designated school staff members who lead attendance efforts at each district school and the information could not be provided. This suggests that there is a need for the district to provide training to school teams in efforts to support this initiative and ensure the proper resources are in place for execution at the school level.

Student Attendance Percentage

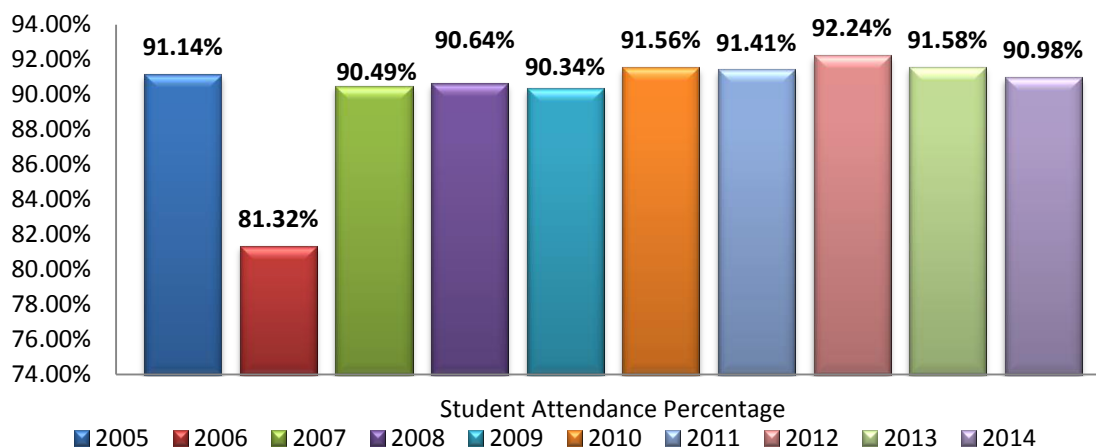


Figure 7 Data Source: NPS 2014 Certified Annual Financial Report

Enrollment/Attendance Trends

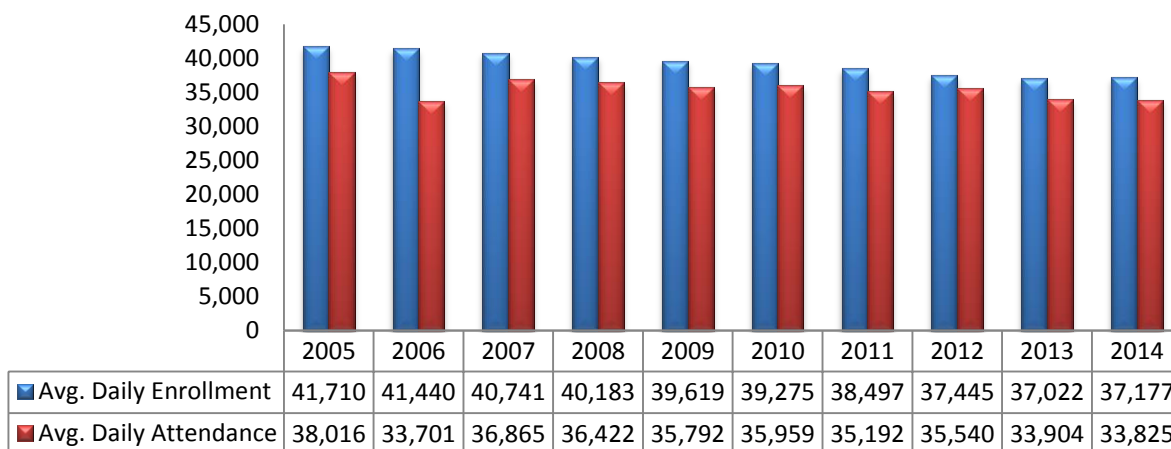


Figure 8 Data Source: NPS 2014 Certified Annual Financial Report

Recommendations

1. The board should offer revisions to the district's current attendance policy to establish clear guidelines for the designation of schools based staff responsible for student attendance and quarterly reporting of the number of attendance interventions and pupil action plans implemented within each Assistant Superintendent Network.
2. The district should provide professional development specific to student attendance improvement for members of each school's Student Support Team. The professional development should occur during the summer and 1st quarter of each school year.
3. Develop a community based Attendance Task Force by May 2015 to study the issues surrounding chronic and severe absenteeism in the district and provide solutions based action plan that can be implemented by the district in the fall of 2015.

Finding 5. ONE NEWARK - UNIVERSAL ENROLLMENT

The State Appointed Superintendent implemented a citywide universal enrollment process/system as a component of the One Newark Plan for the 2014-15 school year. The universal enrollment process/system required collaboration from city charter schools and allowed for a centralized enrollment process of all Newark schools for the first time in the district's history. The implementation of the universal enrollment process/system exposed concerns from family members regarding their views of school choice and highlighted the existing of a two-tiered public educational system in the city of Newark.

While the existence of a universal enrollment process/system provides families with the option to pursue school placements for their children outside of their neighborhood schools, it is clear that an imbalance or form of inequality still exists because "not all families will receive placement in a high performing school." Our Board does not view universal enrollment as the

fix for improving the quality of education for all children in Newark. The pathway to educational equality must be one that consists of having the same system-wide accountability for all public education institutions operating in Newark and the sharing of best practices among these institutions.

MOU Key Components:

The culmination of each phase in the work of the Policy Design Committee resulted in the completion of the MOU signed by all of Newark's charter schools. Most importantly, for charter school partners that participated in universal enrollment, the MOU calls for a common accountability system that is "fair, transparent, and prioritizes student outcomes". It also highlights the intent to drive deeper collaboration between *the charter schools* and NPS to share and implement best practices and there was to be a focus on increasing the collaboration between NPS and participating charter schools on increasing access for Newark's neediest students. The MOU's "core commitments" are outlined below:

1. Promotion of a common accountability system that is fair, transparent, and prioritizes student outcomes

- a. Purpose: Prior to Universal Enrollment, there was no common accountability system across traditional public and public charter schools. By requiring that all schools opting into the Universal Enrollment system participate in common reporting practices, Newark Public Schools is able to ensure consistent and equitable comparison across schools. This practice holds all schools to the same standard of excellence and ensures that all families have access to quality information.

2. Equitable access to high quality options for students in every ward

- a. Purpose: Prior to Universal Enrollment, traditional public schools served a disproportionately high number of students with disabilities and students on free lunch, as compared to charter public schools. In order to distribute the concentration of high needs students more equitably across traditional public and public charter schools, NPS developed the Universal Enrollment system and MOU with charters, which holds all participating schools to the same standards and thereby enforces more equitable distribution of high-needs students across schools.

3. Creation of a multi-year strategy that ensures students have access to 21st century schools in every ward

- a. Purpose: Charters with approved expansion plans in Newark were expanding primarily in downtown prior to Universal Enrollment. These schools opened new seats one grade level each year. This expansion strategy was contributing to a higher concentration of quality school options in downtown, causing a slow but steady exodus primarily from the south and west wards.

NPS, through the development of the Universal Enrollment MOU, successfully collaborated with charters to re-direct the opening of charter seats to meet existing demand, with a particular emphasis on access across four grade levels, as opposed to one grade level at a time. This strategy of charter school recruitment to Newark's high-need areas was to allow for more equitable distribution of quality school options, and reduce impending mobility across the district.

4. Deeper collaboration between North Star Academy and NPS schools leading to the active sharing and implementation of best practices

a. Purpose: Prior to Universal Enrollment, there was minimal sharing of best practices across traditional public and public charter schools. In order to enhance learning across all schools in the district, NPS created mechanisms that allow for sharing of best practices across schools, particularly as it relates to talent recruitment and data-driven knowledge.

Our Board has neither seen the implementation of actions that truly support these tenets of the MOU nor have we seen the qualitative data that measures the growth of Newark students across all city schools. The universal enrollment process has provided strong data points that should be used to develop school specific action plans to drive student achievement. When reviewing the school selections of families from the first year of the universal enrollment process, we have concluded the following:

- A ranking of the Top 12 K-8 schools families selected as their number 1 choice revealed that no Newark Public Schools located in the South or West wards were listed in this ranking.
- The ranking of the Top 12 K-8 schools families selected as their number 1 choice was evenly split between charter schools and Newark Public Schools, as follows:
 1. North Star Academy Charter Schools
 2. TEAM Charter Schools
 3. Phillip's Academy Charter School
 4. Newark Legacy Charter School
 5. Ann Street School
 6. First Avenue School
 7. Lafayette Street School
 8. Marion P. Thomas Charter School
 9. Oliver Street School
 10. Luis Munoz Marin
 11. Science Park High School ***serves 7th and 8th grade students***
 12. Park Elementary School
- The rankings for K-8 schools also indicate that Luis Munoz Marin was the only district Renew School selected as a top choice for families.

- A ranking of the Top 12 High Schools families selected as their number 1 choice revealed that NPS High Schools were the preferred choice for parents and families. Charter schools held three (3) of the top twelve (12) spots in the ranking.

K-8 #1 Enrollment Selection

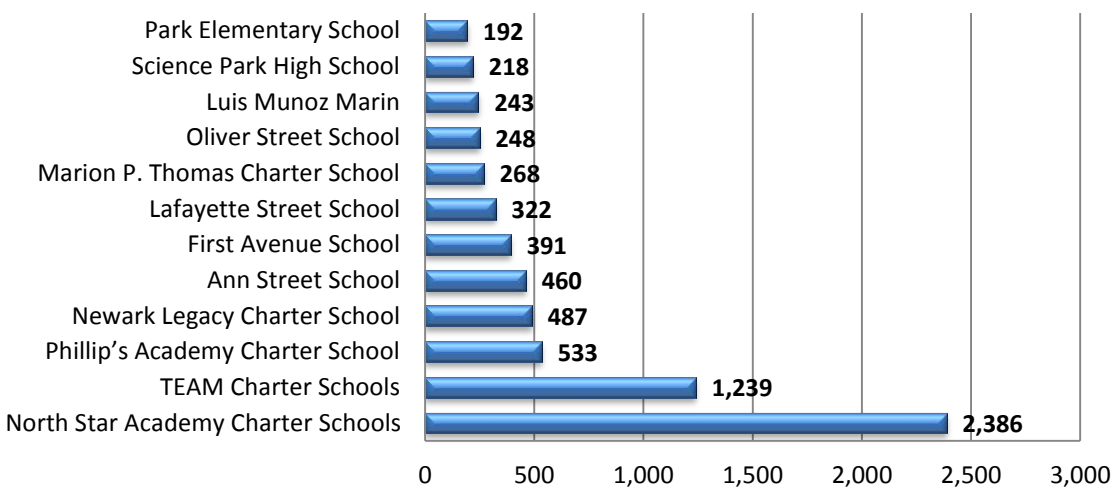


Figure 9 Data Source: NPS Records

High School #1 Enrollment Selection

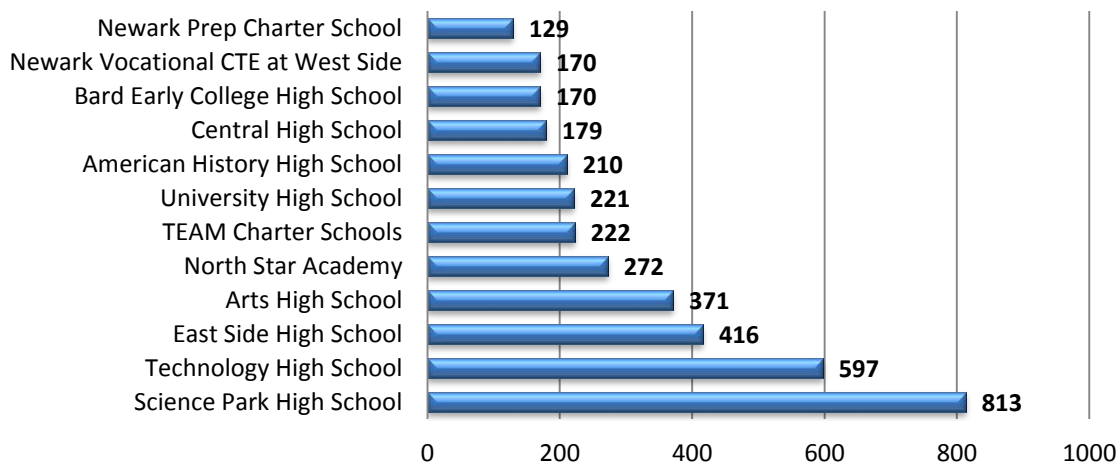


Figure 10 Data Source: NPS Records

Charter School Enrollment

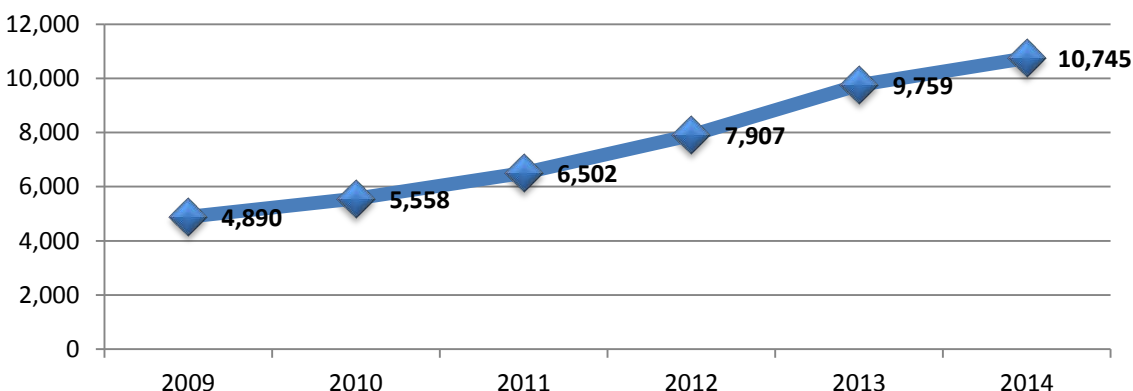


Figure 11 Data Source: NPS 2014 Certified Annual Financial Report

Recommendations:

1. The district and Board of Education, in conjunction with Charter Partners, should host a citywide education conference for all Newark teachers. The current focus for collaboration is geared towards system accountability and is missing the inclusion and voice of the most important element; frontline employees (educators).
2. The district should analyze the academic return on investment for all initiatives that have been implemented in Renew Schools to determine the efficacy of such implementation and practices. Results from this analysis will determine the effectiveness of the district's renew practices and will determine what changes should be made at these respective schools.
3. An analysis and forecast of the of universal enrollment should be undertaken as soon as possible. As charter school enrollment increases and the district's solutions for school turnaround seem to lag in performance, universal enrollment is likely to continue pushing families away from NPS schools, further exacerbating the district's financial challenges. This analysis/forecast should concentrate on the choice and preference systems, and then recommend ways to greatly improve the balance in universal enrollment.
4. The district should implement a robust parent and community satisfaction survey to capture how effectively the universal enrollment system is working.

Personnel/Policy

BACKGROUND – PERSONNEL/POLICY

The mission of the Personnel Committee is to drive efficiency and proper alignment of Newark Public Schools' organizational structure and strategic goals, and to enact sound HR practices that will strengthen the culture of the Newark Public Schools workforce. The Committee is also charged with ensuring that actual spending for salaries is in line with yearly budgets and projections. Other goals include annual reviews of district personnel policies; recommending new policies and/or amendments to existing policies to ensure compliance with statutes and long-term strategy of Newark Public Schools; and increasing engagement and support from Newark Board of Education members regarding critical legislation (both state and federal) that impact student achievement and the operations of public school districts.

Finding 6. EVALUATIONS OF CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF

Our Personnel/Policy Committee requested performance evaluations of all central office employees from 2011-2014. The District was unable to provide this information and advised that this information is not systematically collected. Managers are expected to conduct performance evaluations; however, there is no evidence or data to show compliance. The District advised committee members that the creation of a new evaluation system is underway and will be implemented by spring 2015. Our Board is concerned with the District's current practice of increasing central office employee salaries without a proper performance evaluation process/system in place. We also question whether managers and supervisors are aptly trained to monitor performance, regularly recommend improvement plans, make decisions on retaining or terminating employees, etc. Providing salary increases without formal evaluations appears to be random and subjective without a formal method of support or justification.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a policy that outlines processes and timelines for department heads and managers to conduct annual midyear and year-end performance reviews for employees within their respective business units.
2. Provide the SAB with the framework and structure of the evaluation process (i.e., how performance objectives are set; ratings categories and structures; what remedies or rewards systems are being instituted, etc.)
3. Ensure that the new personnel evaluation system is aligned with other districts under NJ state intervention
4. Correlate the proposed evaluation system with the existing and/or proposed district compensation system

Finding 7. EMPLOYEES WITHOUT PLACEMENT SITES POOL (EWPS)

The EWPS (Educators Without Placement Pool) has been in effect since 2011, and has increased from 81 employees in 2011-12 (at an annualized cost of \$6,396,288); to 225 employees in 2012-13 (\$18,655,232); to 271 employees in 2013-2014 (\$22,573,340). These sharp increases in both EWPS population and costs means that the district is financially exposed to a practice which has not produced its intended outcomes. As of this Assessment, the average length of time in the pool is 1.5 years. The State District Superintendent has committed to a strategy of “no forced placements” to fill vacancies in schools, and while the Board understands the decision to avoid forced placements, there is a clear fiduciary responsibility to balance this policy against operational efficiency. The EWPS statistics indicate that resources are being diverted away from the educational mission, and there are increased carrying costs to pay personnel who are inactive and who may not have been effectively evaluated. The Board is very interested in exploring viable options to this practice. ***See finding 15 for additional information regarding the impact of EWPS.

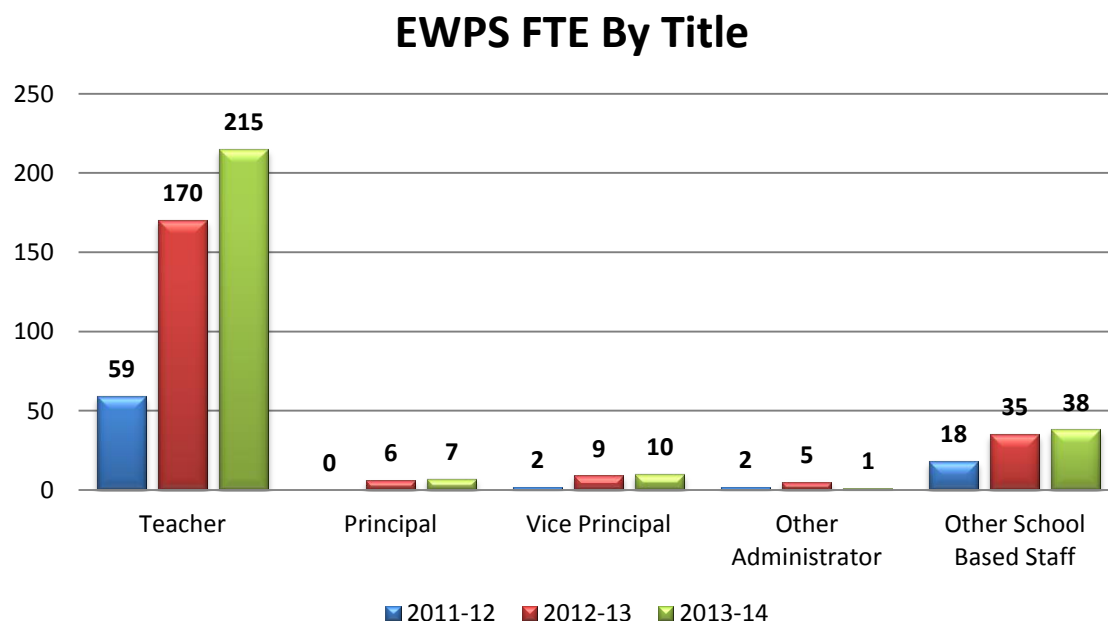


Figure 12 Data Source: NPS Records

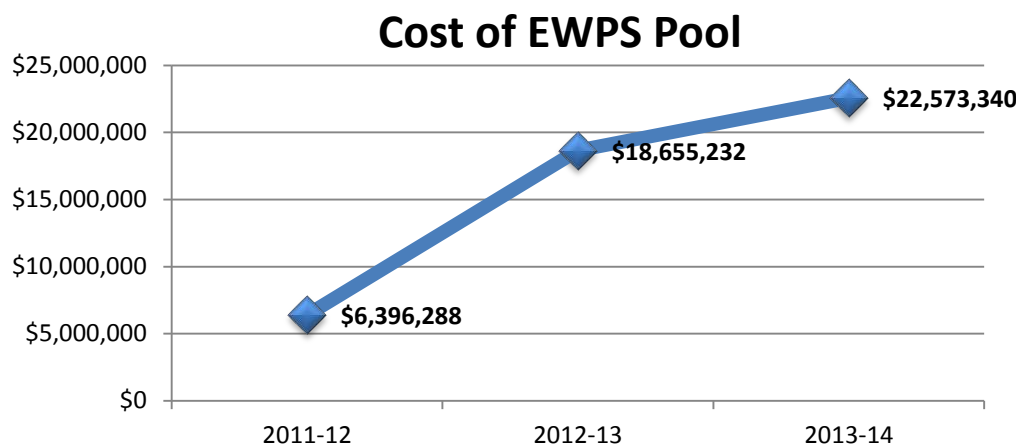


Figure 13 Data Source NPS Records

Recommendations:

1. Conduct a census to qualify which teachers in EWPS have seniority, credentials and qualifications/certifications to be placed back in classrooms and fill existing teacher vacancies with staff from EWPS Pool by August 1, 2015.
2. Develop and implement Enhanced Professional Development Plan for employees in EWPS Pool to develop and sharpen teaching skills.
3. Develop plans to release personnel from EWPS if their qualifications or credentials do not meet expected performance standards.

Finding 8. TEACHER RETENTION

The teacher turnover and retention rate was 89% in 2011-12, 88% in 2012-13, and 85% in 2013-14. We believe that these retention rates are favorable, and the Board encourages the district to continue employing these retention methods, assuming that the quality of instruction is superior and that academic results will improve.

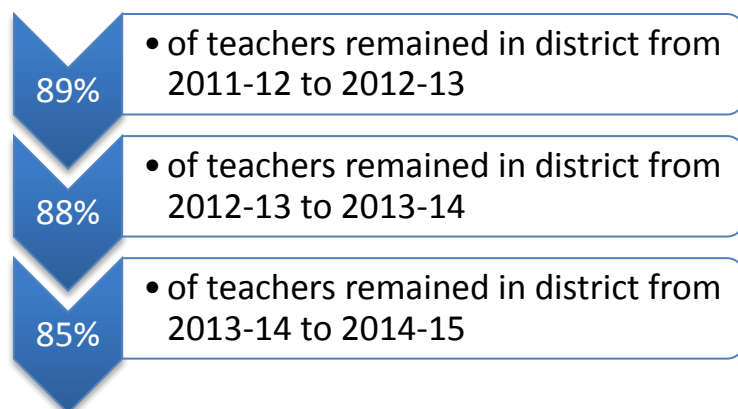


Figure 14 Data Source: NPS Records

Recommendations:

1. The district should report on the overall performance of retained teachers in terms of student academic outcomes, by academic content/subject matter, by school, and by grade
2. In combination with examining the EWPS pool, the district should revise its hiring and termination practices in order to reduce the costs of turnover and replacement
3. The district should examine its practices and costs for substitute teachers, which would expectedly increase as fewer permanent teachers are retained

Finding 9. MERIT PAY/TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Newark Public Schools has transformed the way it rewards high performing educators by providing merit pay bonuses. The district paid out \$1.3M to 190 teachers who were rated “Highly Effective” during the first year of merit pay implementation (2012-13). That number increased to 206 (with an associated merit payout of \$1.4M) in 2013-2014. Approximately 29 Newark Public Schools had zero teachers rated “Highly Effective” in 2012-2013, and 62% of these schools had zero teachers rated as “Highly Effective” in 2013-2014. We appreciate the fact that there is likely a direct correlation between teacher effectiveness and student achievement, but the effectiveness of merit pay in Newark has not yet been determined.

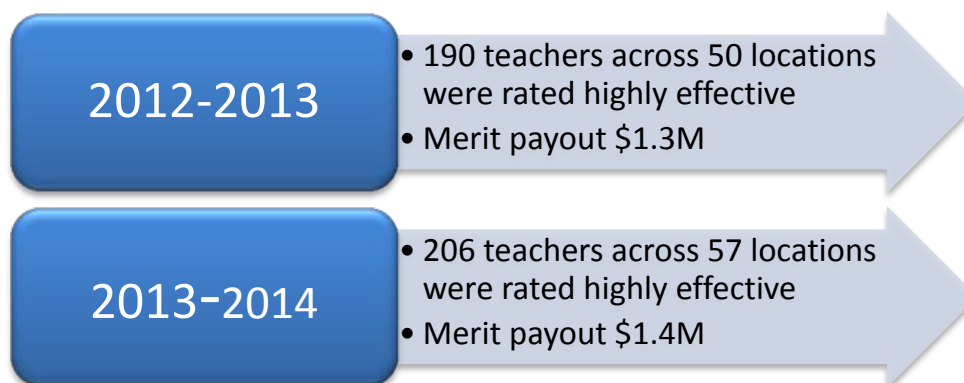


Figure 15 Data Source: NPS Records

The district’s strategic goal is to build capacity and make more high quality seats available for Newark students. There is a serious need to understand the lack of growth and development among the teaching staff at schools which have no “Highly Effective” teachers over multiple consecutive years. We have an immediate concern that recruiting efforts for these schools may not be effective, and the district may be unable to recruit high quality instructional staff members, some of whom are likely to be recruited by Newark’s charter schools. Other concerns are the lack of professional development and the inability of school leadership to create a culture of excellence. Barringer S.T.E.A.M Academy, George Washington Carver School, Thirteenth Avenue School, and McKinley Elementary School are among those schools that have had zero teachers rated as highly effective in consecutive years. Each of these schools has been the topic of public comment from community members during Board meetings.

Recommendations:

1. The district should review the hiring and retention practices for teachers and the entire instructional staff and correlate hiring trends to performance ratings.
2. The district should present its plans for professional development with particular attention paid to teachers who have had sub-par performance ratings.
3. For schools that have had consecutive years of low/no highly effective teachers, the district should present a plan to reconfigure staffing or change school leadership practices.

Finding 10. USE OF SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

An analysis of substitutes used showed that yearly use of substitute teachers has declined by 27.1% from 2011-2014. 1,055 were used in 2011-12, with the average number of working days being 80 per sub. In 2011 each substitute was providing on average 520 hours of instructional time to Newark students, equating to 548,600 hours of total instructional time being provided by substitute teachers. The district reduced the amount of instructional time provided by substitute teachers by 21.7%, but the average number of teaching days per substitute increased from 80 to 86 during the same period and the average substitute provided 559 hours of instruction time in 2013-14 compared to 520 hours in 2011-2012. Substitute hours for programs such as summer school were included in the analysis.

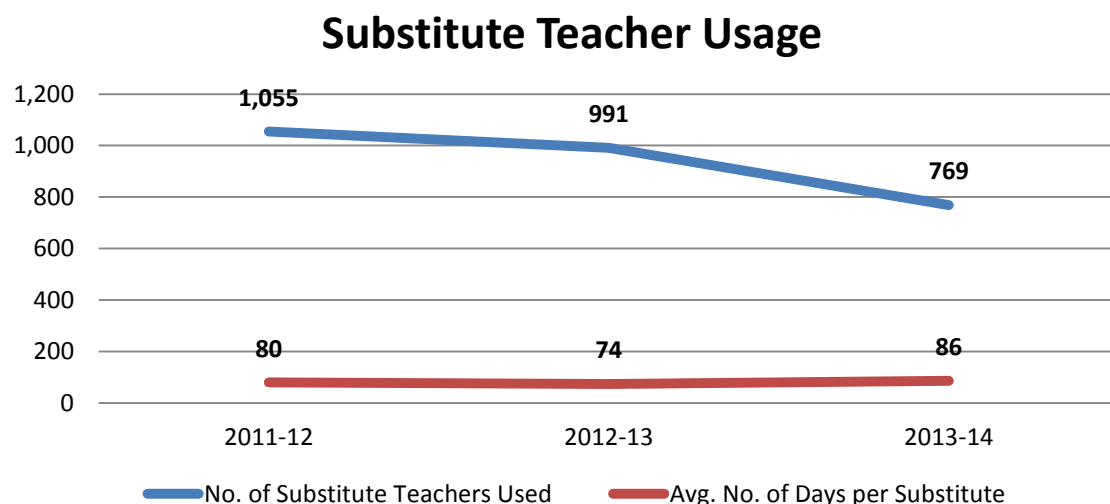


Figure 16 Data Source: NPS Records

Recommendations

1. Although progress has been made in reducing the absolute number of substitute teachers, the district does not seem to have a coordinated plan to permanently address how substitutes are deployed. The district must develop a cost-effective plan to systemically reduce the use of substitutes, or to convert substitutes to permanent status.

2. The district must develop and implement internal controls to reduce the spending for substitute teachers by principals.

Finding 11. TEACHER ATTENDANCE

An analysis of teacher attendance by schools for 2012-13 and 2013-14 for more than 18 days ranged from 0% to 67%. According to district standards “eighteen (18) or more absences by a teacher in one school year constitutes chronic absence.” However, NPS teachers are given eighteen (18) sick days per year in accordance with the current collective bargaining agreement between NPS and the Newark Teacher’s Union. Overall, the Board believes these numbers were high and would like to see them average no higher than 20%.

Recommendations

1. As related to the substitute teacher analysis (above), the district should develop an analysis of teacher attendance, by school and by grade, in order to understand what factors are creating regular absences.
2. The district might investigate how to reward/incentivize teachers who are regularly in attendance and study how their high attendance may correlate to high academic performance.
3. The district should use upcoming contract negotiations as an opportunity to address teacher attendance.

Finance

BACKGROUND - FINANCE

The mission of the Finance Committee is to ensure the financial solvency of Newark Public Schools so that it provides quality academic programs to its students and their families; to strengthen the fiscal position of Newark Public Schools so that funds are used more effectively and efficiently at Central Office and in schools; and to guide the prioritization of spending to directly impact student achievement and operational efficiency.

Finding 12. CHARTER SCHOOL PAYMENTS

Until recent years, Newark Public Schools had a monopoly on public education in the city of Newark, but the emergence of charter schools has created a competitive environment for market share among providers. . In fact, Newark was noted as the 3rd highest rated district in the recent Brookings Education Choice and Competition Index (ECCI). Newark has received an “A-“ grade (#3 in the rankings behind Orleans Parish, LA and NYC) for its range of choices for schoolchildren. The ECCI is an annual guide to the conditions of K-12 school choice in the nation’s largest school districts. The ECCI examines variation in district-level choice based on objective scoring of thirteen categories of policy and practice. (http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2015/~media/Multimedia/Interactives/2015/ecci/2014%20ECCI_web_FINAL.pdf). We acknowledge that the expansion and growth of charter schools has provided a broader variety of school options, but we also know that this variety comes at a steep price: declining enrollment in traditional schools means enormous financial pressure on the district and is the root cause for employee layoffs and reduction in per pupil resources.

We feel that there is a correlation between decreased enrollment, the acceleration in the number of charter schools, and the overall quality of education across the city. In aggregate, charter school payments from 2010 – 2015 totaled \$818.17M, and it appears that those payments will continue to increase at a rate that surpasses the NPS administration’s ability to reduce expenditures. The \$213.94M charter payment made by NPS during the 2014-2015 school year accounts for 23% of the total operating budget for the organization. As a result, NPS has become a conduit for the passage of funds from the state to district charter schools.

Chater School Payments



Figure 17 Data Source: NPS 2014 Certified Annual Financial Report

NPS and Charter Enrollment Trend

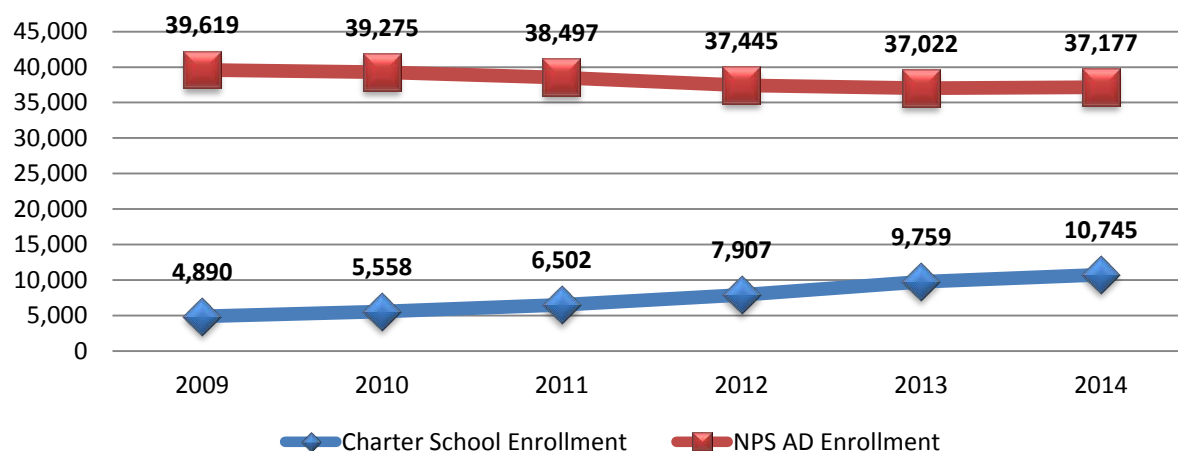


Figure 18 Data Source: NPS 2014 Certified Annual Financial Report

The district has embarked upon a mission to drive system wide accountability between both district and charter schools. Since approximately 82% of the district's revenues come from state aid, which is based upon student enrollment, then the absence of a clear plan of action to make our schools more competitive and appealing will mean further revenue losses. We are also concerned that the district's S.U.C.C.E.S.S. strategic goals cannot be fully implemented because of the impact of enrollment declines.

Recommendations

1. The One Newark Plan and other strategies need to be updated to reflect the clear adverse effects of charter school growth on the district's budget.

2. The district should present how it is monitoring charter schools for performance, compliance, etc.
3. The district and Board should collectively weigh-in on the granting of new charters in Newark

Finding 13. OVERSPENDING

The Newark Public Schools District has the largest operating budget and student population of any school district in New Jersey. Newark Public Schools is an Abbott District and receives approximately \$720 million of funding in yearly state aid to operate. Over the last 3 years, state funding has averaged 81.8% of the operating budget and local revenue sources (e.g., local tax levy and tuition) accounted for 14.8% of the operating budget. Significantly, the district has experienced an overrun of its yearly budget in each of the last three years, largely attributed to the costs of salaries and benefits and the impact of increasing charter school payments. Newark Public Schools has overspent an average of \$26.58M on salaries and benefits in each of the fiscal years from 2012 – 2014.

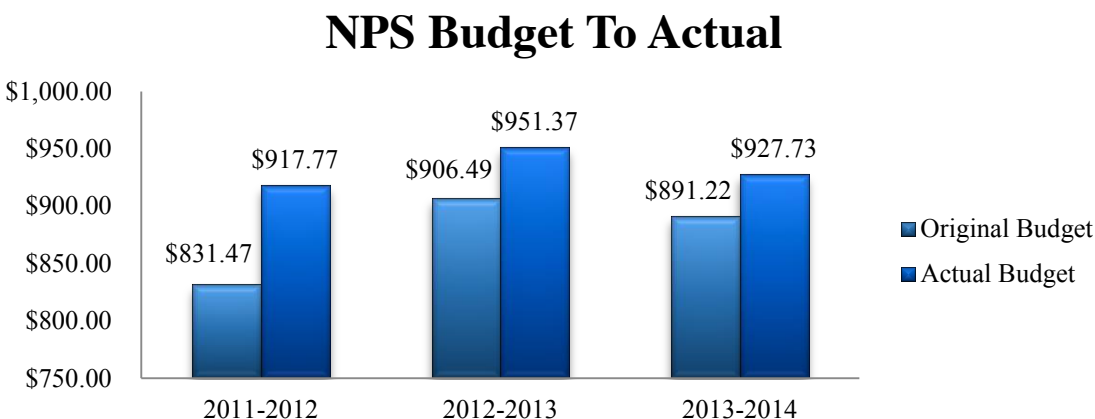


Figure 19 Data Source: NPS Records

Newark Public Schools uses a weighted student formula (WSF) to drive school-based budgets. The WSF serves as a means of providing more equity as it pertains to budgeting for district schools. The WSF was implemented to provide autonomy for principals and to allow them to address the needs of their student populations while supporting the strategic plans of their specific schools.

NPS's WSF was designed to ensure that all each district school offers all students academic programming and wrap-around services that are essential to their success. It allocates funding per pupil that is required to provide core resources to all schools with the flexibility of local school decision-making to ensure that each school program is tailored to meet the needs of particular school communities. The WSF consists of two types of funds: nondiscretionary and

discretionary. Non-discretionary funds are restricted and can only be used to ensure that schools budget for required core staffing, such as principals, instructional support staff and other positions the central office deems critical for the school to operate efficiently.

The majority of the school funds are discretionary. Discretionary funds are unrestricted funds used to finance the operation of each school. Discretionary funds must be allocated by the principal and should be used to cover expenditures that would best support the school's academic achievement goals. The principals also maintain discretion on what can be purchased with funds generated by an increase in enrollment. While there is a strong recommendation for principals to use such discretionary funds to improve or add programs that enhance academic achievement, the final decision rests with the school leader.

While the WSF is a significant lever to drive autonomy for school leaders, in effect, rising costs in the annual operating budgets ultimately leads to less money being routed to school based budgets. The district has been able to reduce per pupil costs by 2.98% (\$542 per student) from 2011-12 to 2013-14, but it is clear that the district must operate more efficiently in order to drive more dollars to the classroom, and to adjust budgets against actual costs such as the increases in total administrative costs, and salaries and benefits for administration.

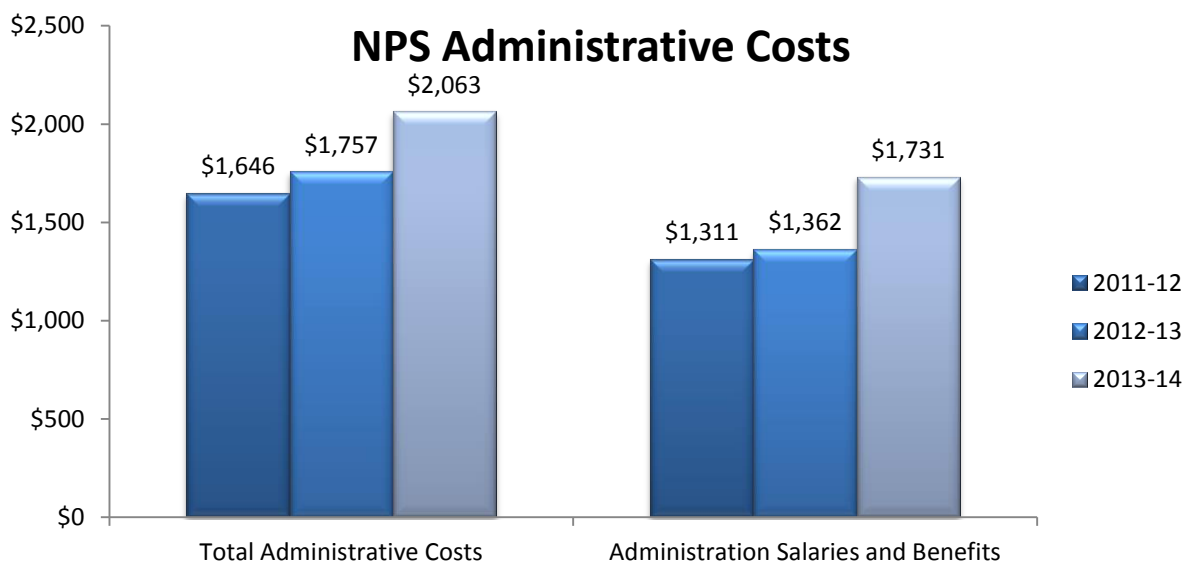


Figure 20 Data Source: NPS Records

Recommendations

1. The district should implement internal controls to ensure overspending is detected early both at the school and central office levels.
2. The district should strengthen Budget to Actual Reporting methods and deliver such reporting to the Board on a quarterly basis.

Finding 14. ACCOUNTING PRACTICES/GAAP STANDARDS

NPS has maintained an impeccable track record for compliance with the GAAP standards and accounting practices. NPS has been awarded the Meritorious Budgeting Award for six consecutive years (2008 – 2014) and the Certificate of Excellence for Financial Reporting from the Association of School Business Officials in 2014, which was the tenth consecutive year that the District has received this distinguished award. Our Board looks to see a more streamlined approach to future budgeting strategies and implement more consistent reporting strategies to focus on Monthly net positions and quarterly Budget to Actual Reporting.

Finding 15. DECLINING FUND BALANCE

The District has underfunded critical budget line items in consecutive years and has had to use surplus funds to fill budget gaps in each of the last three fiscal years. As a result the district's fund balance has declined from \$31.1M (FY2012-13) to a projected \$5M (FY2014-15) and is nearly depleted going into FY2015-16. The surplus funds for NPS are critical to the District's ability to relieve financial pressure and fill budget gaps. There is a direct correlation between the decline in the district's reserve funds and overspending for employee salaries and benefits. The overspending is mainly attributed to the rising costs of the Employee Without Placement Sites Pool (EWPS) and other compensation such as per diem employees.

The district budgeted to spend \$10.5M for the EWPS Pool in FY2013-14 but the total cost was \$22.5M. The district underfunded the cost of EWPS by \$12.5M or 119%. During the 2014-15 Budget Hearing, the District explicitly highlighted that projected costs for EWPS was \$33.5M for FY2014-15 and that the pool could not be maintained at the projected cost given the District's budget crisis. The District submitted an equivalency waiver to the NJ DOE in efforts to implement a performance-based lay-off for employees. The request for the equivalency waiver was denied. However, there was no plan to significantly reduce the number of employees in the EWPS Pool beyond the use of an equivalency waiver.

NPS Yearly Fund Balance

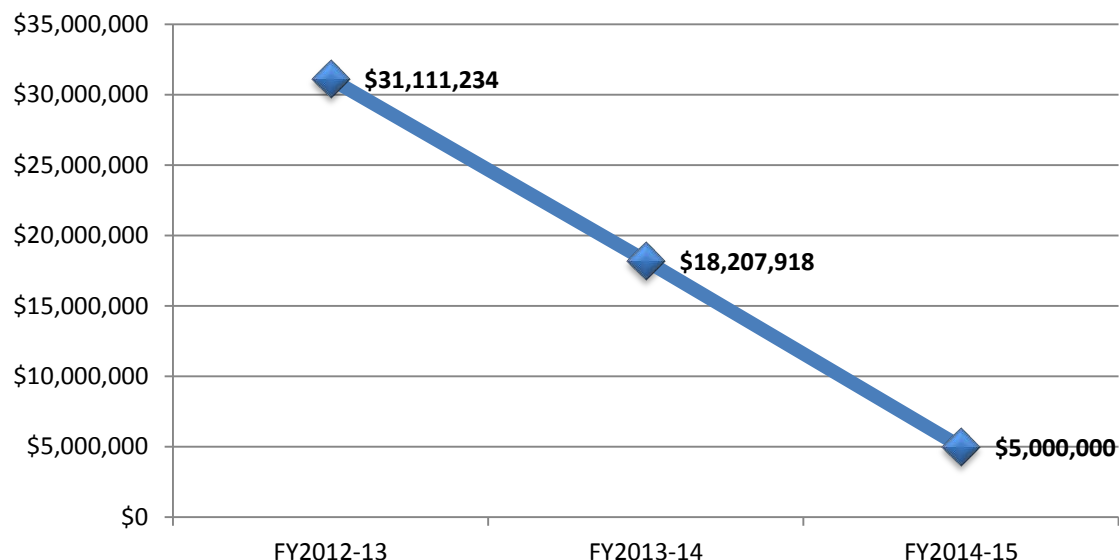


Figure 21 Data Source: NPS 2014 Certified Annual Financial Report

According to the District, 79% of employees in the EWPS Pool have been in the pool for two or more years. While the District has reported that hiring fairs, workshops, and coaching is available for these employees these efforts seem to be ineffective and have rendered no success in reducing the costs of the EWPS Pool. While our Board understands the State District Superintendent's position to avoid the force placement of educators to ensure effective educators lead classrooms, the fact remains that NPS cannot maintain or carry the costs of the EWPS Pool. The State District Superintendent maintains her position that "placing teachers in classrooms if they are rated ineffective or have not been selected by school leaders would have a catastrophic impact on student achievement and the district's ability to be on the path to excellence and retaining families."

Carrying the excessive costs of the EWPS Pool is also having a catastrophic impact of student achievement. The costs of the EWPS Pool has added an enormous amount of financial pressure and has become a major roadblock in the District's efforts to drive more funds to classrooms. Immediate action must be taken to reduce the cost of the EWPS pool and current number of employees in the pool.

Recommendations

1. The district should resubmit equivalency waiver to the NJ Department of Education.
2. Attempt to counsel out employees who have been in EWPS pool for two (2) or more years and have not made improvements to their performance.

Finding 16. ALTERNATE REVENUE SOURCES

The 2014 NPS Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (pg. 72) highlights the District's economic dependency on support from federal and state governments. The report further states, "a significant reduction in the level of support, if this were to occur, could have had an adverse effect on the District's programs and activities." According the 2014 NPS Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (pg. 34) actual investment income amounts were \$2.7M less than the modified budget amount as a result of decline in interest rates offered by financial institutions and the reduction in cash as result of changes in federal revenues to the reimbursement method.

Actual miscellaneous income exceeded the modified budgeted amount by \$1.4M in FY 2013-14. This occurred as a result of the District's conservative budgeting approach and budgeting less miscellaneous income that had been realized previously. The District also realized additional income from charter school rental agreements that were established in FY2013-14. Moving forward it is extremely important for the District to aggressively seek alternate revenue sources to help offset expenses and support the District's ability to drive additional resources to classrooms and directly impact students.

Recommendations

1. The district should explore opportunities to generate additional revenue. These opportunities should be low risk activities that support the district's current strategies and generate an unrestricted cash flow for NPS.
2. The district should partner with Sustainable New Jersey to increase the participation in Energy Savings Initiative Programs. NPS has reported over \$500k in energy savings and can deliver greater savings by aggressively implementing Energy Savings Plans at each district school/facility.

Operations

BACKGROUND - OPERATIONS

The mission of the Operations Committee is to drive efficiency of Newark Public Schools operations in the area of facilities and security, ensure the proper maintenance of NPS facilities, and to ensure the establishment of safe working and learning environments for NPS students and employees implementation of sound public safety policies/initiatives.

Finding 17. LONG RANGE FACILITIES PLAN

The District submitted a Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) to the NJDOE which was approved for a period of five years. The Department has determined that the District's proposed enrollments are supportable for approval of the District's LRFP amendment. The Department requires a current enrollment projection with an application for a school facilities project, incorporating the District's most recent enrollments as verification that the LRFP's planned capacity remains appropriate. "System" actions upgrade existing conditions without changing spatial configuration or size. "Inventory" actions address space problems by removing, adding, or altering sites, schools, buildings and rooms.

The District conducted a deep analysis of the facility conditions of all buildings in the NPS inventory. According to the analysis, 83% of NPS facilities were constructed before 1975 and the average age of NPS facilities is 82. The analysis also classifies more than 70% of school facilities to be in "poor or very poor" conditions. All wards in Newark have schools that were classified by the District as being "poor or very poor" and the Central, South, and West wards have the largest inventories of "poor or very poor" schools in the city.

It is apparent that deferred maintenance and a lack of investment in NPS facilities have created widespread building issues including scaffolding around school buildings, malfunctioning HVAC systems, and peeling paint. The district estimates the cost to repair and bring all NPS facilities up to 21st century standards would require an investment of \$1.3B. Our Board supports investments to upgrade existing school facilities and urges the district to advocate for the funding the NJ School Development Authority committed to NPS for new school construction projects.

Recommendations

1. The district should consider the formation of a third party entity that would operate as Newark Public Schools CDC with the mission of receiving and managing funds to allow NPS to directly manage all future school construction projects.

2. The district should request a one-time lump sum payment from the NJ School Development Authority to cover the cost of the commitment made to construct new school for NPS. The one-time lump sum payment can be used to establish the Newark Public Schools CDC and allow for immediate local management of NPS construction projects.

Finding 18. EFFICIENCY OF OPERATIONAL SPENDING

Assessment of operational efficiencies will be conducted during our Board's second assessment. Data provided by NPS and the Council of Great City Schools to complete the assessment. Key Performance Indicators for Operations have been identified in our Board's Strategic Governance Plan.

Governance

BACKGROUND - GOVERNANCE

Governance is a major component of the district's QSAC performance and is collectively owned by both the District Administration and Board. The ability to deliver true governance of Newark Public Schools requires a high level of commitment from our Board and alignment with the State Appointed Superintendent to ensure the return of local governance is a priority for the District Administration as well.

Finding 19. BOARD DEVELOPMENT/QSAC PERFORMANCE

Local Governance in the area of fiscal management was returned to the Newark Board of Education in August 2014. Our Board drafted an initial transition plan and submitted it to the State Department of Education in efforts to make a clear pathway for proper governance in this area. Our Board worked in conjunction with the District Administration and State Department of Education to fine tune the transition plan. Our Board made history on two fronts:

1. Becoming the first takeover district in the state of NJ to formally regain local governance in the area of Fiscal Management.
2. Adopting the first formal transition plan for the return of fiscal management to local school districts under state intervention in NJ. This transition plan will likely be used as a model for other school districts in the future.

The Essex County Superintendent and leadership team conducted both an interim and full assessments of the District's QSAC Performance in April 2014. The interview results were published in June 2014 and show great improvements in the area of Personnel. This is the first time the District has received a perfect score on any of the components of QSAC. Our Board has taken actions to help ensure the performance in this area is sustained as we move forward. Our Board has taken the following actions to help develop our governance skills and sustain performance on NJ QSAC:

- Governance Documentation:
 - Developed and adopted a first-ever Governance Strategy Plan which included the use of external metrics (from the Council of Great City Schools), revised committee structures, and accountabilities for each SAB committee, etc.
 - Review and publication of a Board Operating Procedures Manual that guides protocols and action steps between the district and SAB
- Board Member Engagement
 - Board meeting attendance (94.4%) of all business meetings
 - Board meeting attendance (90.7%) of all public sessions

- Board member attendance (estimate 80%) at SAB committee meetings
 - Board member attendance (79.6%) at SAB board retreats and special meetings
- Realigned Board Organizational Structure
 - Aligned each Board Member with Assistant Superintendent Network to drive partnership and collaboration between Board and District Administration
- Restructured Board Committees
 - Created formal Budget Committee – first time Board has had formal Budget Committee since state takeover in 1995.
 - Removed Personnel and Operations from umbrella of Finance Committee and reestablished as stand-alone committees with Committee Chairpersons to provide better oversight, foster greater collaboration between Board members and District Administrators, and develop Board Leadership
- Established Guidelines to Conduct District Assessments – Our Board is responsible for conducting a minimum of two (2) assessments per year of the District's performance and progress. Our Board conducted its first assessment of the District's performance since state takeover in 1995.
- Increased Board Member Training
 - Completed six (6) training modules from the Board Development Plan (incorporated in the Transition Plan) that were developed and delivered by Dr. Leroy Nunery II, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, NJ Department of Education
- Increased Board Member Training through NJSBA
 - Currently on pace to earn Board Certification for the entire Board by April 2015
 - Board members have earned a total of 126 individual credits (2014-2015) through the NJ School Boards Association. This has been reported as the highest amount of training conducted by the Newark Board of Education in any year.
 - Positioned Board to have three (3) Board Members earn individual Certified Board Member status by April 2015.
 - Increased engagement with NJSBA on board training and certification through the Board Development Plan
 - Sharply increased NJSBA Annual Conference attendance by 5 SAB members
- Increased Board Member engagement and leadership on the County and State Level
 - Board President Rashon K. Hasan serves as VP of Legal for the Essex County School Boards Association and was also appointed to serve as a member of the NJ School Boards Association Legal Committee representing Legislative District 28.
 - Board Vice-President Ariagna Perello serves as a Delegate for the NJ School Boards Association.
 - Board member DeNiqua Matias served as Board Delegate during the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years.

Newark Public Schools QSAC Performance

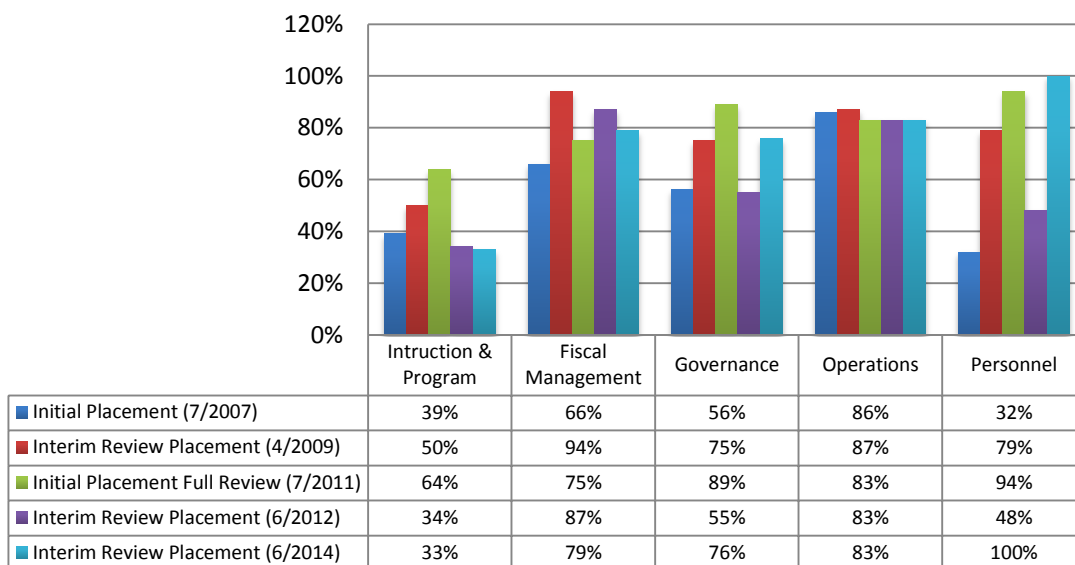


Figure 22 Data Source: New Jersey Department of Education

Recommendations:

1. Continue to encourage the growth and development of Board members to become better able to govern.
2. Reestablish Board's role as the governing body of Newark Public Schools by leading and governing through effective policy
3. Request the immediate release of results from full QSAC review of April 2014.
4. Continue to strengthen relationship with State Department of Education to calibrate the existing pathway to local governance.
5. Maintain consistency of Board leadership to sustain new initiatives and further development in critical areas.

Finding 20. COMPLIANCE WITH CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS (CAP) AND AUDIT FINDINGS

NPS lacks consistency as it pertains to having internal controls in place to minimize risks or unfavorable impact on the achievement of District objectives. The goal of internal controls are to provide management with a reasonable basis for asserting that NPS is achieving its operational, reporting, and compliance objectives. Annual audits and QSAC performance reviews for NPS have identified repeat findings for matters of record keeping, confirming orders, personnel file management, handling vendor purchases, and several other areas of exposure or potential loss. Repeat findings are a clear indication of poor risk management and

internal controls. Internal controls of the organization must be coupled with strong control activities, and control activities must possess the following characteristics:

- Control activities must be appropriately selected
- Control activities must incorporate general controls over technology
- Control activities must be effectively implemented through policies and procedures

The District's inability to spend in accordance to its approved budgets shows that the proper control activities or lever are either non-existent or aligned improperly. The following items are corrective actions for repeat findings in recent audits of NPS and highlight inefficiencies or lack of internal controls:

- Strengthen internal controls on withholding of employee share of health premiums (CAP 2012, 2013)
- Strengthen internal controls on timely removal of employees from District health insurance following separation – *NPS has paid benefits for a number of former employees as a result.*
- Complete filing I-9s for all employees (2011, 2012) – *NPS was unable to provide the required I-9 forms for all employees when requested. The I-9 form is a federal requirement for employment in the United States.*
- Strengthen maintenance of employee records (CAP 2011, 2012, 2013) – *NPS was unable to provide employment records for all current and past employees.*
- Strengthen procedures to trace students to school class registers and charter school applications (DRTRS) (CAP 2011, 2012, 2013) – *Prior to Universal Enrollment the District struggled with accurate reporting of students who enroll into and transfer from District schools. Evidence from NPS shows that the internal controls are still ineffective, as 3,000+ students are unaccounted for in the District for the 2014-15 school year.*
- Strengthen internal controls on approval for all vendor purchase orders prior to providing services (CAP 2011, 2012, 2013) – *While the number of confirming orders have decreased within the district, internal controls to eliminate confirming orders are not in place. A memo was drafted to implement actions for confirming orders but was not acted upon. As it stands there are no consequences for employees who purchase orders without first obtaining purchase orders.*
- Review of 3rd party providers and completion of final reports to ensure potential liabilities are properly budgeted (CAP 2011, 2012, 2013)
- Strengthen internal procedures for adherence to Public School Contracts Law (CAP 2011, 2012, 2013)
- Strengthen internal grant management controls, including grant budgets, amendments, and allocations of expenditures (CAP 2011, 2012)
- Monitor School Improvement Grants expenditures (CAP 2012, 2013)

- Ensure students in ASSA report are properly supported + payments only with executed tuition contracts (including private school providers) (CAP 2011, 2012, 2013)

Recommendations

1. The district should explore the impact of creating a position of Compliance Officer as a member of the Risk Management Team. The role of the position (which could be full-time or contractor-based) would be to monitor and report on the progress of the district's compliance to and implementation of corrective action plans.

NEXT STEPS:

The Newark Board of Education is pleased to present its first Assessment of District Progress, and is looking forward to engaging with the Administration, the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, public officials, community members, and private citizens on the various findings and recommendations. We view this initial Assessment as a starting point and a work in progress: each recommendation has been thoughtfully developed in the spirit of making the district a highly functioning and more capable organization, and each recommendation will require coordination and buy-in from multiple constituents in order for them to be realized. We acknowledge that some of the findings and recommendations may require re-prioritization of strategies and objectives, and accordingly, we encourage all readers to read the Assessment through the perspective that our resources, processes, and priorities must be aligned if Newark public schools are going to succeed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The Newark Board of Education would like to thank the district administration for providing detailed information and support for the production of this initial Assessment of District Progress.